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MARILINA CESARIO

ROMANCING THE WIND: THE ROLE OF GALES IN THE *ANGLO-SAXON CHRONICLE**

The Anglo-Saxon chroniclers' interest in eclipses, comets, and other celestial phenomena undoubtedly derives from classical and Continental annals, but the recording of the wind in association with human affairs is quite exceptional. The wind is noted twelve times in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, between the years 1009 and 1123, but there is no mention of it in the "common stock". This article investigates the role of the wind in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* and examines whether the Anglo-Saxon annalists' awareness of the meteorological phenomenon was prompted by the dissemination of computistical materials. These included Easter tables, treatises on natural science, texts and diagrams on the direction and/or names of winds, weather prognostics and prognostication by the wind, which reached England from Fleury during the Benedictine Reform. This study will also consider whether there was a correlation, a cause and effect relationship, between the wind and the events narrated.

Sic ventorum et imbrium signa, quae dixi, rationem quam habeant, non satis perspicio; vim et eventum agnosco, scio, approbo [...] (Cicero, *De Divinatione*, I.x.16)

('Thus to the cause of those premonitory signs of wind and rain already mentioned I am not quite clear, but their force and effect I recognise, understand and vouch for [...].')

0. *Introductory and general remarks*

Unusual or unforeseen incidents, whether in nature, such as storms, strong winds, thunder out of a cloudless sky, cloudbursts, earthquakes and floods,

* I wish to thank László Sándor Chardonnens for encouraging me to pursue this line of enquiry and for our stimulating conversations, and Immo Warntjes for his helpful comments. Also I am grateful to Donald and Leah Scragg for suggesting the title of this paper. Finally I would like to thank the anonymous referees for their insightful suggestions.

or incidents in life, such as dreams, are often seen as *signa* or *portenta* which demand interpretation. Typically, care is taken to note every event that follows the appearance of the supposed sign, in the belief that whatever the sign portended would not be far behind. Sign (or prognostic), *σημείον*, was “the technical term in Stoic logic for the antecedent of a conditional that revealed its consequent”.¹ *Signa* or *portenta* are not held responsible for what happens after them; they merely foretell what will occur. Some astronomical signs, including solar and lunar eclipses and comets are generally associated with some kind of disaster.²

The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle (henceforth *ASC*) is filled with descriptions of and references to astronomical and meteorological phenomena. Comets, solar and lunar eclipses, falling stars, red crosses, and other celestial occurrences are consistently recorded by Anglo-Saxon chroniclers alongside the most important events for each year: deaths of bishops or kings, famines, battles, attacks on monastic centres, and so forth. The Anglo-Saxon chroniclers’ interest in eclipses, comets, and other celestial phenomena undoubtedly derives from classical and Continental annals (the movements of the sun and the moon, for example, played a fundamental role in determining the date of Easter in a given year), but the recording of the wind in association with human affairs is quite remarkable. Whereas solar and lunar eclipses, comets, floods and earthquakes are visual phenomena which can be easily recorded, thunder and wind are more fleeting, less tangible events. Why were the Anglo-Saxon chroniclers interested in reporting the occurrences of wind? Did they attribute a prognosticatory function to the wind? Was there a correlation, a cause and effect relationship between the meteorological phenomenon and the events narrated? It should be noted that whereas the wind is

¹ According to Sextus Empiricus, “the sign is the preposition in the antecedent of a valid conditional that reveals the consequent” (Daryn Lehoux, “Logic, physics, and prediction in Hellenistic philosophy: *x* happens, but *y*?” in *Foundations of the Formal Sciences*, IV: *History of the Concept of the Formal Sciences*, ed. by Benedict Löwe *et al.*, London 2006, pp. 125-142, at p.126).

² For a discussion on solar and lunar eclipses in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, see Marilina Cesario, “Kingship and prognostication”, in *Royal Authority in Anglo-Saxon England*, ed. by G. Owen-Crocker, forthcoming. See also R. Bremmer / S. L. Chardonnens, “Old English prognostics. Between the moon and the monstrous”, in *Monsters and the Monstrous in Medieval Northwest Europe*, ed. by K. E. Olsen and L. A. J. R. Houwen, Leuven 2001, pp. 153-165. For a study of astronomical phenomena in the Irish annals, see D. McCarthy / A. Breen, “An evaluation of astronomical observations in the Irish annals”, *Vistas in Astronomy* 41 (1997), pp. 117-138. See also Robert R. Newton, *Medieval Chronicles and the Rotation of the Earth*, Baltimore 1972.

mentioned twelve times between the years 1009 and 1123, it is entirely absent from the records of previous years. Why was that? It is the purpose of this study to investigate the function of the wind in the *ASC* and examine whether the meteorological phenomenon acquired an importance based on previously undeveloped scientific awareness in the minds of late Anglo-Saxon learned communities, and whether such knowledge was assimilated into historical sources such as the *ASC* and other monastic products.³ It will also consider whether the wind acquired a prognosticatory dimension and was considered a sign, portending significant events in the world of men. This is not to say that prognostication and scientific thinking were in opposition to each other. On the contrary, investigation of a meteorological phenomenon enhanced its prognosticatory force. As Rolf Bremmer and László S. Chardonnens argue,

The art of prognostication is based upon the supposition that nature in all its manifestations is imbued with significance. Man, who is subject to nature, is able to interpret those manifestations and profit by them. To this end he must acquire a profound knowledge of natural phenomena, varying from the course of the celestial bodies (i.e. astronomy) to weather conditions (meteorology).⁴

I believe that an investigation of the occurrences of the wind in the *ASC*, within their larger manuscript and cultural contexts, should enlighten our understanding of the 11th- and 12th-century annalists' sustained interests in natural science and in prognostication. Barbara Obrist remarks that

³ In this article the word *scientific* is used in relation to Lat. *scientia*, intended as a form of higher knowledge which examines the natural world, according to systematic and organised principles; cf. James S. Ackerman, "On Scientia", *Daedalus* 94 (1965), pp. 14-23. In the early medieval world, *scientia*, as well as any other form of knowledge, was subordinated to the Christian faith. For Wallis, Bede's "*scientia* simply denoted 'knowledge' [...] It was rather that he understood time-reckoning and the study of the natural world not to be self-contained and self-explanatory disciplines, but subordinate elements of *doctrina Christiana* – 'Christian instruction' or erudition useful for Christian preachers and exegetes" (Faith Wallis, "Bede and science", in *The Cambridge Companion to Bede*, ed. by Scott DeGregorio, Cambridge 2010, pp. 99-126, at p.114). Computistical and medical texts and treatises on natural phenomena are labelled as *scientific* compositions by most scholars; see e.g. Stephanie Hollis, "Scientific and medical writings", in *A Companion to Anglo-Saxon Literature*, ed. by Ph. Pulsiano and E. Treharne, Oxford 2008, pp. 188-208.

⁴ Bremmer / Chardonnens, "Old English prognostics ...", p. 154.

Historians of science have rarely looked into conceptions of the physical world during the period extending from Isidore of Seville (d. 637) to the late eleventh century. Instead they have limited their research almost exclusively to the related topics of astronomy and reckonings of time, leaving unexamined medieval speculations on the composition of the world and on such natural phenomena as winds. Two assumptions have led to this neglect. The first is a belief that Roman and, a fortiori, early medieval physics was extremely rudimentary and therefore unworthy of attention; the second is a belief that, with the acceptance of Christianity, the physical world no longer held interest as a subject of study and was invested solely with spiritual meaning.⁵

Apart from their apparent religious significance, winds as part of the physical world were also objects of careful investigation; an understanding of winds was, in fact, believed to be of importance in everyday life, particularly in the fields of medicine (epidemics),⁶ agriculture and seafaring. Furthermore, winds are mentioned in some Anglo-Saxon weather prognostic texts – including the *Revelatio Esdrae* (which exists in numerous copies) and prognostication by the wind – which survive mainly in 11th- and 12th-century manuscripts.⁷ Does this suggest that a belief in the prognosticatory power of the wind was a product of the monastic society of the 11th and 12th centuries with its interest in scientific knowledge, and that this belief found its way into the *Chronicle* from the same sources? Likewise, can any conclusion be drawn from the manuscript context and places of production of the *Chronicles* in which references to the wind occur, namely MSS C, D and E?

In answering, or at least exploring, these questions, it is important to keep in mind the complex compilation and transmission history of the *ASC*. Most

⁵ Barbara Obrist, “Medieval diagrams and medieval cosmology”, *Speculum* 72 (1997), pp. 33-84, at p. 33.

⁶ One wind in particular, *Auster*, was believed to be responsible for corrupting the air and bringing pestilence to other regions: *Auster ab auriendo aquas vocatus, unde et crassum aerem facit et nubila nutrit. Hic Graece νότος appellatur, propter quod interdum corrumpat aerem. Nam pestilenciam, quae ex corrupto aere nascitur, Auster flans in reliquis regiones transmittit; sed sicut Auster pestilentiam gignit. (Isidori Hispalensis episcopi Etymologiarum sive Originum Libri XX, I-II, rec. [...] W. M. Lindsay, Oxonii 1911, vol. II, XIII.xi.6).*

⁷ Anglo-Saxon weather prognostics (year prognosis) are edited in László S. Chardonnens, *Anglo-Saxon Prognostics, 900-1100: Study and Texts*, Leiden 2007, pp. 491-500. For a discussion of the English versions of the *Revelatio Esdrae*, see also Marilina Cesario, “Weather prognostics in Anglo-Saxon England”, *English Studies* 93 (2012), pp. 391-426.

scholars agree that there is no such thing as one *Chronicle*.⁸ The history of the text known as the *ASC* is one of constant additions, alterations and continuations. The compilers' personal interests created numerous opportunities for a given manuscript to be copied, transmitted and modified according to what was significant to the place where and the audience for whom they transcribed the material. Several surviving copies derived from the original "common stock" that most scholars tend to place in the reign of King Alfred (871-899). Each copy, through intermediate stages, developed its own features and may be considered as a distinct and individual work.⁹ The *ASC* survives in seven manuscripts and one fragment known by letters of the alphabet (A-H). It is not the aim of this article to discuss the surviving copies of the *Chronicle*, instead it will briefly focus on MSS C, D and especially E in relation to those annals where occurrences of the wind are noted.¹⁰

1. *Occurrences of the wind in the 'ASC'*

The wind is recorded twelve times in the *ASC*, between 1009 and 1123, and as stated previously, there is no mention of it in the "common stock".¹¹ It appears three times in MS C (years 1009, 1039 and 1052), four in MS D (years 1009, 1050, 1053 and 1075) and seven in MS E (years 1009, 1103, 1114, 1118, 1121, 1122 and 1123). With the exception of the annal for 1123E, for all the other years the wind, as recorded by the chroniclers, is vehement and memo-

⁸ See, e.g., *Two of the Saxon Chronicles Parallel [...]*, I-II, ed. by Charles Plummer on the basis of an edition by John Earle, 2nd ed., Oxford 1952, and Simon Keynes, "Manuscripts of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle", in *The Cambridge History of the Book in Britain*, I: c. 400–1100, ed. by Richard Gameson, Cambridge 2011.

⁹ Nicholas Brooks is of a different opinion; see Nicholas Brooks, "Why is the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* about kings?", *Anglo-Saxon England* 39 (2010), pp. 43-70.

¹⁰ All quotations from the *ASC* are taken from the relevant volumes in *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle: A Collaborative Edition*, gen. eds D. Dumville and S. Keynes, Cambridge / Totowa (NJ) 1983- (referred to as *ASCCE* in the final Bibliography), namely: vol. 5: *MS. C.*, ed. by Katherine O'Brien O'Keeffe, Cambridge 2001; vol. 6: *MS. D.*, ed. by G. P. Cubbin, Cambridge 1996; vol. 7: *MS. E.*, ed. by Susan Irvine, Cambridge 2004. English translations of the *ASC* are taken from *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle: A Revised Translation*, ed. and introd. by Dorothy Whitelock, London 1961.

¹¹ *Ormete podenas* 'immense whirlwinds' are only mentioned in MSS D, E and F for the year 793 and, as Bremmer and Chardonnens argue, they are clearly seen as signs. Cf. Bremmer / Chardonnens, "Old English Prognostics ...", p. 153.

rable: it is, in fact, *mycla* ‘great’ (in 1039C; and *micla/mycel* in 1053D), *stranga* ‘strong’ (in 1050C and 1052D), *ungemetlice mycel* ‘excessively strong’ (in 1121E) and *swyðe/ormete mycel* ‘very strong’ (in 1114E, 1121E and 1122E). The adjectives employed with reference to the wind seem to suggest a desire on the chronicler’s part to impress their audience and emphasise the rarity of the natural phenomenon through a possibly exaggerated description, and consequently allow it to be fixed firmly in people’s memory. According to Thomas A. Bredehoft,

The Chronicle includes numerous claims about some natural event or circumstance being the greatest in the memory of men, while on the other hand, a number of politically oriented events are identified as superlative with specific reference to preceding historical circumstances: invasions, reigns of kings, and so forth [...]. Most of the other events identified in the Chronicle as being remarkable within the memory of men involve similar sorts of natural occurrence. We see notices of the greatest wind in memory, for example, in annals 1009E, 1103E, and 1118E [...] The frequency with which the memory of men is used to indicate the exceptional nature or degree of these natural events is notable: clearly the chroniclers felt that human memory was the proper time-frame in which to assess (or describe) the impact of such natural disasters and occurrences. Such events deserve a place in the historical record, the Chronicle implies, not because they necessarily stand out in the narrative of historical time, but rather because their prominence in the memory of men gives them a historical significance.¹²

The wind as reported in the *ASC* is described as the greatest, the most terrifying, *swilc nan man ær ne gemunde* (‘worse than any man can remember’, in 1009C, 1103E and 1118E),¹³ even if, as Bredehoft suggests, some events are contemporary to the chronicler and not reported through memory.¹⁴ In fact, seven times out of eleven the chroniclers give the exact day (and in one case even the time: *on sancte Marie messedæi. þa wearð swiðe mycel wind fram þa undern dæies to þa swarte nihte* ‘on St Mary’s Feast Day, there was

¹² Thomas A. Bredehoft, “History and memory in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*”, in *Readings in Medieval Texts: Interpreting Old and Middle English Literature*, ed. by D. F. Johnson and E. Treharne, Oxford 2005, pp. 109–121, at p. 114.

¹³ In most Continental versions of the prognostication by the wind, the meteorological phenomenon is described as *fortis* / *vehemens* / *validus* / *magnus*.

¹⁴ See Bredehoft, “History and memory ...”, p. 115.

a very big wind from 9 a.m. till dark night' in 1122E) on which the wind is noted to be linked to some sort of catastrophe: *Thomes mæsseniht* in 1052C, 1053D and 1118E; *on Octobris monðe, ac he wæs ormæte mycel on þa niht octabe Sancti Martini* ('in the month of October, but [the winds were] exceptionally violent on the night of 18 November') in 1114E; *Sancte Laurentius mæssedæg* in 1121E; *þe Tywesdæi æfter Palmes Sunendæi wæs swiðe micel wind on þet dæi .xi. kalendas Aprilis. and on þæs dæi .vi. idus Septembris þet wæs on sancte Marie messedæi* ('on the Tuesday after Palm Sunday there was a very big wind, on 22 March' and 'on 8 September, which was on St Mary's Feast Day') in 1122E.

Each time (perhaps with the exception of the year 1123) the wind is seen as a destructive force and therefore connected to unlucky events. In the year 1009C, D and E, Brihtric's 80 ships are beaten, dashed to pieces and cast ashore by such a mighty wind that, according to the chronicler, *nan man ær ne gemunde* ('no man remembered its like'). As a consequence Wulfnoth burns up the ships.¹⁵ In 1039C *se micla wind* precedes the deaths of Brihtmær Bishop of Lichfield, Leofric's brother, and *swiðe fela godra manna mid heom* ('many other holy men with them').¹⁶ In 1050D,¹⁷ Osgod's ships are destroyed by *se stranga wind*.¹⁸ The

¹⁵ *Þa genam se Brihtric him to hund eahtatig scypa 7 ðohte þæt he him micles wordes wyrcean sceolde þæt he Wulfnoð cucone opþe deadne begytan sceolde. Ac þa hi ðiderwerd wæron, þa com him swilc wind ongear swilc nan man ær ne gemunde 7 þa scypo ða ealle tobeot 7 toþærsc 7 on land awarep, 7 com se Wulfnoð sona 7 þa scypo forbærnde* ('Then the aforesaid Brihtric took with him 80 ships, intending to make a big reputation for himself and to capture Wulfnoth alive or dead. But when they were on their way thither, such a wind blew against them that no man remembered its like, and it beat and dashed to pieces all the ships, and cast them ashore, and at once Wulfnoth came and burnt up the ships'). The same account appears in F, where the OE text has *weder* instead of *wind* (translated as *tempestas* in the Latin version). The entry also corresponds closely to the one in *The Chronicle of Henry of Huntingdon*; see *The Chronicle of Henry of Huntingdon* [...], transl. and ed. by Thomas Forester, London 1853, p. 187.

¹⁶ *M.xxxix. Her com se mycla wind. 7 Byrhtmær bisceop gefor on Licetfelda. 7 Wealas slogon Eadwine, Leofrices broðor eorles, 7 Þurcil 7 Ælfget, 7 swiðe fela godra manna mid heom* ('M.xxxix. In this year occurred the great wind, and Brihtmær, Bishop of Lichfield, died. And the Welsh killed Edwin, Earl Leofric's brother, and Thorkil and Ælfgeat and very many good men with them').

¹⁷ D is one year in advance of the true date.

¹⁸ *Þa cyððe man þam cyng þæt Osgod lage on Ulpe mid .xxxix. scypon. 7 se cyng þa sende æfter þam scypum þe he ofsendan mihte. Þe ær ham wendon. 7 Osgod fette his wif on Bryge 7 wendon eft ongear mid .vi. scypum. 7 þa oðre foron on Suðsexe to Eadulfesnæsse. 7 þær hearm dydon. 7 wendon eft to scypon. 7 heom com þa stranga wind to. swa þæt hi wæron ealle forfarene buton feower. þa man ofsloh begeondan sæ. On þam þe Godwine eorl 7*

wind of 1052C and 1053D causes widespread damage and is followed by the killing of Rhys, the Welsh king's brother, and the deaths of bishops and abbots.¹⁹ In D the account begins with the mention of the wind: *Her wæs se micla wind on Pomes mæsseniht, 7 eac eall þa midewinter wæs mycel wind. 7 man rædde þæt man sloh Ris þæs Wyliscean cynges broþer. forðy he hearmas dyde* ('In that year there was a strong wind on the night of St Thomas' Feast Day, and also there was much wind throughout Christmas. And Rhys the Welsh king's brother was killed, for he did great damage').²⁰ In 1075D *se stranga wind* destroys and casts ashore King William's ships which contained great gifts and many

Beorn lagon on Peuenesea, þa com Swein eorl 7 bæd Beorn eorl mid facne. þe wæs his eames sunu. Þæt he his gefera wære to þam cyng to Sandwic. 7 his wisa wið hine gebette ('Then the king was informed that Osgod was at Wulpe with thirty-nine ships, and the king sent for all the ships he could summon from among those which had gone home. And Osgod placed his wife at Bruges, and they went back again with six ships, and the others went to Sussex to *Eadulfesness*, and they did damage there and then returned to the ships, and then a strong wind overtook them so that they were all lost except for four that were killed overseas. While Earl Godwine and Earl Beorn were staying at Pevensey, Earl Swein came and treacherously asked Earl Beorn, who was his uncle's son, to accompany him to the king at Sandwich in order to improve his relations with the king'). The same account appears in the *Chronicle of John of Worcester* for the year 1049, in which the adverse force is not *ventus* but a more all-encompassing *tempestas*; see *The Chronicle of John of Worcester*, I-III, ed. by R. R. Darlington and P. McGurk, transl. by J. Bray and P. McGurk, Oxford 1995, vol. II, p. 551.

¹⁹ From C: *Ðæt wæs on þone Monandæg æfter Sancta Marian mæsse þæt Godwine mid his scipum to Sudgeweorce becom. 7 þæs on merigen on þone Tiwesdæg hi gewurdon sehte swa hit her beforan stent. Godwine þa gesticlode hraðe þæs þe he up com 7 eft gewyrpte. ac he dyde ealles to lytle dædbote of þære Godes are þe he hæfde of manegum halgum stowum. On þam ylcan gearre com se stranga wind on Thomes mæsseniht, 7 gehwær mycelne hearmdyde. Eac man sloh Hris, þæs Welscan cynges broþer* ('It was on the Monday after St. Mary's Day that Godwine came to Southwark with his ships, and the morning after, on the Tuesday, that they came to an agreement which has been stated above. Then Godwine fell ill soon after he landed, and recovered again, but he did all too little reparation about the property of God which he had from many holy places. In the same year came the strong wind on the night of the Feast of St. Thomas, and did great damage everywhere. Also Rhys the Welsh king's brother was killed').

²⁰ For the year 1052 E reports: *wearð Godwine eorl gewarnod 7 gewende him þa into Pefenesea, 7 wearð þet wæder swiðe strang þet þa eorlas ne mihton gewitan hwet Godwine eorl gefaren hæfde* ('Earl Godwine was warned, and he went to Pevensey, and the *weder* (storm?) became so violent that the earls could not find out what had happened to Earl Godwine'). There is another reference to the wind of the year 1052 in the *Chronicle of John of Worcester* and in the *Irish Annals of Inisfallen*; see *The Chronicle of John ...*, vol. II, p. 573, and *The Annals of Inisfallen* (MS. Rawlinson B. 503), ed. with transl. and indexes by Seán Mac Airt, Dublin 1951, pp. 212-213.

treasures given to him by King Malcolm and Edgar's sister Margaret.²¹ In 1103E the wind causes great damage and precedes the death of Matthias, Abbot of Peterborough.²² The entry for the year 1114E reports that in the same year, in

²¹ *MLXXV. On þissum gere Wyllelm cyngc for ofer sæ to Normandige. 7 Eadgar cild com of Fleminga lande into Scotlande on sancte Grimbaldes mæssedæg. 7 se kyngc Malcholom 7 his sweostor Margareta hine underfengon mid mycclan weorðscype. On þære ilcan tide sende se kyng of Francrice, Filippus gewrit to him, 7 bead him þæt he to him come. 7 he wolde geofan him þone castel æt Munstræl, þæt he mihte syððan dæghwamllice his unwinan unþancas don. Hwæt þa se cyngc Malcolm 7 his sweostor Margareta geafon him myccla geofa 7 manega gærsama 7 eallon his mannan. on scynnan mid pælle betogen. 7 on merðerne pyleceon. 7 graschynnene. 7 hearmascynnene. 7 on pællon. 7 on gyldenian faton. 7 on seolfrenan. 7 hine 7 ealle his scyperan mid mycclan weorðscipe of his gryðe alædde. Ac on þære fare heom yfele gelamp þa hi ut on sæ wæron. þæt heom on becom swiðe hreoh weder. 7 seo wode sæ 7 se stranga wind hi on þæt land awearp þæt ealle heora scypa toburston. 7 hi sylfe earforðlice to lande coman. 7 heora gærsama forneh eall losade. 7 his men eac wurdon sume gelæhta of Frencyscan mannan. ac he sylf 7 his ferestan men ferdon eft ongean to Scotlande. sume hreowlice on fotan gangende. 7 sume earmlice ridende* ('MLXXV. In this year King William went overseas to Normandy. And Edgar Cild came from Flanders into Scotland on St. Grimbald's Day. And King Malcolm and Edgar's sister, Margaret, received him with great honour. At the same time the king of France, Philip, sent a letter to him and ordered him to come to him, saying he would give him the castle of Montreuil so that he could do daily harm to those who were not his friends. So now King Malcolm and Edgar's sister, Margaret, gave him and all his men great gifts and many treasures consisting of skins covered with purple cloth, and robes of marten's skin and of grey fur and ermine, and costly robes and golden vessels and silver, and led him and all his naval force out of his jurisdiction with great honour. But on the journey it turned out badly for them when they were out at sea, in that they met very rough weather, and the raging of the sea and the strong wind cast them ashore so that all their ships foundered and they themselves got to land with difficulty and their treasure was nearly all lost. And some of his men were captured by the French, but he and his fittest men went back to Scotland, some walking miserably on foot, and some riding wretchedly').

²² *On þisum geare eac æt Heamstede innan Barrucscire wæs gesewen blod of eorðan. Ðis wæs swiðe gedeorfsom gear her on lande þurh mænifealde gyld 7 þurh orfwealm 7 wæstma forweorþenisse. ægðer ge on corne 7 eac on eallon treowwæstmas. Eac on morgen uppon Sancte Laurentius mæssedæg gedyde se wind swa mycel to hearne her on lande on eallon westmas swan nan man ne gemunde þet æfre ænig ær gedyde. On ðisum ylcan geare Mathias abbot of Burh forðferde. se ne lyfode na leng þan an geare syððan he abbot wæs. Æfter Sancte Michaelæ mæssan on .xii. kalendas Nouembris he wæs mid procession underfangan to abbotte. 7 on ðam ylcan dæge þes oðres geares he wearð dead on Gleawceastre 7 þær bebyrged* ('In this year also, at Finchampstead in Berkshire, blood was seen coming from the earth. This was a very grievous year in this country through all sorts of taxes, and cattle plague and ruin of crops – both corn and all the produce of trees. Also, on the morning of St. Laurence's Day, the wind did so much damage to all crops in this country that no one remembered it ever doing so much before. In this same year Matthias, abbot of Peterborough, died – he lived no longer

which King Henry went to Normandy, precisely towards the end of May, *wæs gesewen an selcuð steorra mid langan leoman manege niht scinende* ('a strange star was seen, shining with a long trail of light for many nights'). This was followed in this same year by an ebb-tide and after that there were *mycele swiðe windas* in the month of October, but exceptionally violent on the night of 18 November, that caused much damage everywhere in woods and villages.²³ In 1118E, the deaths of Queen Maud at Westminster, on 1 May, and Robert, count of Meulan are followed by *swiðe ungemetlice mycel wind* ('an excessively strong wind') which destroys houses and trees.²⁴ Also in the same year Pope Paschal

than a year after he was abbot. After Michaelmas, on 21 October, he was received as abbot with a procession and on the same day next year he died at Gloucester, and was buried there'). A great wind is also noted in the *Chronicum Scotorum* for this year, although there is no correspondence with the historical events reported in E; see *Chronicum Scotorum. A Chronicle of Irish Affairs, from the Earliest Times to A.D. 1135 [...]*, ed. with a transl. by William M. Hennessy, London 1866, p. 311.

²³ *On þison geare heold se cyng Henri his hyred to Natiuiteð on Windlesoran, 7 þæs geares syððan he ne heold hired nan oftær. And to middansumeran he ferde mid furde into Wealon, 7 þa Wyllscean coman 7 wið þone cyng griðedon, 7 he let þærinne castelas weocean. 7 þæræfter innan September he for ofer sæ into Normandig. Ðises geares on æfteward Mai wæs gesewen an selcuð steorra mid langan leoman manege niht scinende. Eac on þis ylcan geare wæs swa mycel ebba æghwær anes dæges swan an man æror ne gemunde 7 swa þet man ferde ridende 7 gangende ofer Tæmese be eastan þære brigge on Lunden. Þises geares wæron mycele swiðe windas on Octobris monðe, ac he wæs ormæte mycel on þa niht octabe Sancti Martini, 7 þet gehwær on wudan 7 on tunan gecyðde. Eac on þisum geare se cyng geaf þet arcebiscoprice on Cantwarabyrig Raulfe se wæs æror biscop on Hrofeceastre. And se arcebiscop on Eoferwic Thomas forðferde* ('In this year king Henry held his court at the Nativity at Windsor, and did not hold his court again this year. At midsummer he went with levies into Wales, and the Welsh came and made peace with the King; and he had castles built in that country. Thereafter, in September, he went oversea into Normandy. In this year, towards the end of May, a strange star was seen, shining with a long trail of light for many nights. Also one day in this same year there was an ebb-tide which was everywhere lower than any man remembered before; so people went riding and walking across the Thames to the east of the London Bridge. In this year there were very strong winds in the month of October, but exceptionally violent on the night of 18 November, and left a trail of damage everywhere in woods and villages. Also in this year the king gave the archbishopric of Canterbury to Ralph who had been bishop of Rochester, and Thomas, the archbishop of York, passed away').

²⁴ *On þison geare on þære wucon Theophanie wæs æfenes swyðe mycel lihtinge 7 ungemetlice slæge þæræfter. And seo cwen Mahald forðferde on Westmynstre þæsægges kalendas Mai 7 þær wæs bebyrged. And se eorl Rotbert of Mellent þises geares forðede. Eac on þison geare to Sancte Thomas mæsse. wæs swa swiðe ungemetlice mycel wind. Þet nan man þe þa lifode nænne maran ne gemunde. 7 þat wæs æghwer geseone ægðer ge on husan. 7 eac on treowan. Ðises geares eac forðferde se papa Paschalis* ('In this year, in the week of the Epipha-

dies.²⁵ The account for 1121E reports that *se mona abystrode* ('the moon was eclipsed') on 5 April. On the night of Christmas Eve there was a great wind all over the country and the damage must have been so obvious to the reader that the chronicler adds *þæt wearð on manegan þingan swyðe gesene* ('that was very obvious in many ways').²⁶ The account for the year 1122E begins with a big fire on 8 March which destroys a monastery in Gloucester. After that, the chronicler reports that, precisely on the 22nd of the same month, there was a very big wind (*wæs swiðe micel wind on þæt dæi .xi. kalendas Aprilis*). This was followed by *feale tacne wide hwear on Englalond* ('many signs far and wide in England'), including an earthquake on 25 July over all Somerset and in Gloucestershire,²⁷

ny, there was very lightning one evening and excessive thunder after it. And Queen Maud died at Westminster on 1 May and was buried there. And Robert, count of Meulan, also died in the course of the year. Also in this year, on St Thomas's Day, there was a wind so excessively strong that nobody then alive remembered any worse, and its effect was obvious everywhere both on houses and trees. In the course of this year also Pope Paschal died').

²⁵ For the year 1118, *John of Worcester*, as he did for the year 1050, replaces the wind with *tonitruo orta est tempestas nimia* (*The Chronicle of John ... III*, p. 145).

²⁶ *Millesimo cxxi. Her wæs se cyng Henri to Cristenmæssan on Bramtune 7 þær æfter toforan Candelmaæssan on Windlesoran him to wife forgyfen Aðelis 7 siððan to cwene gehalgod. seo wæs þæs heretogan dohtor of Luuaine. And se mona abystrode on þære nihte none Aprilis 7 wæs .xiii. luna. And se cyng wæs to Eastran on Beorclea. and þæræfter to Pentecosten he heold mycelne hired on Westmynstre and syððan þæs sumeres mid ferde into Wealan for. 7 þa Wylyscean him ongean coman. 7 æfter þæs cynges willan hi wið hine acordedan. Dis-es geares com se eorl of Angeow fram Ierusalem into his lande 7 syððan hider to lande sende. 7 his dohter let feccean. seo wæs Willelme þæs cynges sune æror to wife forgyfan. And on þære nihte uigilia Natalis Domini wæs swyðe mycel wind ofer eall þis land. 7 þæt wearð on manegan þingan swyðe gesene* ('Millesimo cxxi. In this year Henry was at Brampton at Christmas; and after that, before Candlemas, at Windsor, Adela was given to him as wife and then consecrated as queen. She was the daughter of the duke of Louvain. And the moon was eclipsed on the even of 5 April, and the moon was a fortnight old. And the king was at Berkeley at Easter, and after that at Whitsuntide he held a great court at Westminster and in the summer went into Wales with an army; and the Welsh came to meet him, and they made an agreement with him according to the king's desire. In the course of this year the count of Anjou came from Jerusalem into his country and then sent into this country and had his daughter fetched who had been given as wife to William, the king's son. And on the night of Christmas Eve there was a great wind all over this country, and that was very obvious in many ways'). The same account appears in the *Chronicle of Henry of Huntington*; see *The Chronicle of Henry ...*, p. 249. A great wind in 1121 is also mentioned in the *Annals of Ulster*; see *Annals of Ulster (to A.D. 1131)*, ed. by S. Mac Airt and G. Mac Niocaill, Dublin 1983, p. 146.

²⁷ It was believed that earthquakes were caused by the wind; cf. *Bede: On the Nature of Things and On Times*, transl. with introd., notes and comm. by C. B. Kendall and F. Wallis, Liverpool 2010, ch. 49, pp. 100-101.

and another big wind was noted on 8 September (*wearð swiðe mycel wind fram þa undern dæies to þa swarte nihte*), which was on St Mary's Feast Day, from 9 a.m. till dark night. The death of Ralph, Archbishop of Canterbury on 20 October follows the mention of the wind. This is followed by the suggestive description of an *aurora borealis*.²⁸ The writing of the account must have been contemporary since the chronicler gives the exact time on which the wind occurred. Finally, the annal for the year 1123 is the only instance in which the wind is favourable; in fact, it helps King Henry sail across Normandy.²⁹

Apart from the *ASC*, Irish annals are, as far as I am aware, the only other examples of medieval chronicles which show an interest in the wind, although their motives seem to be different. As Mark Williams suggests,

²⁸ *Millesimo.cxxii. On þis geare wæs se king Heanri on Cristenmæssan on Norhtwic. 7 on Pasches he wæs on Norhtamtune. 7 on þone lententyde þærtoforen forbear se burch on Gleawecestre. Þa hwile þe þa munecas sungeon þære messe. 7 se dæcne hafde ongunnan þone gospel Preteriens Iesus. þa com se fir on usenweard þone stepel 7 forbearnde ealle þe minstre 7 ealle þa gersumes þe wespes dæies .viii. idus Martii. 7 þær æfter þe Tywesdæi æfter Palmes Sunendæi wæs swiðe micel wind on þet dæi .xi. kalendas Aprilis. Þæræfter comen feale tacne wide hwear on Engaland 7 feole dwild wearen geseogen 7 geheord. 7 þes niht .viii. kalendas Augusti wæs swiðe micel eorðdyne ofer eal Sumersetescire 7 on Gleawecestrescire. Siððon on þæs dæi .vi. idus Septembris þet wæs on sancte Marie messedæi. þa wearð swiðe mycel wind fram þa undern dæies to þa swarte nihte. Þeos ilce geares forðferde Raulf seo ærcebiscop of Cantwarbyrig. þet wæs on þæs dæies .xiii. kalendas Nouembris. Þæræfter wæron feole scipmen on sæ 7 on wæter 7 sædon þet hi sægon on norðeast fir micel 7 brad wið þnerðe, 7 weax on lengþe upon an to þam wolcne, 7 se wolcne undide on fower healfe and faht þærtogeanes swilc hit scolde æwenen, 7 se fir weax na þa ma up to þe heovene* ('Millesimo.cxxii. In this year King Henry was at Norwich at Christmas and at Easter he was at Northampton. And in spring, before that, the borough at Gloucester was burnt down. While the monks were singing their mass, and the deacon had begun the gospel *Preteriens Iesus*, the fire reached the upper part of the tower, and all the monastery was burnt and all the treasures that were there except a few books and three mass vestments: that was on 8 March. And after that on the Tuesday after Palm Sunday there was a very big wind, on 22 March. After that came many signs far and wide in England and many apparitions were seen and heard. And on the night of 25 July there was a very big earthquake over all Somerset and in Gloucestershire. Then on 8 September, which was on St Mary's Feast Day, there was a very big wind from 9 a.m. till dark night. This same year Ralph, the Archbishop of Canterbury, died; that was on 20 October. After that there were many sailors, at sea and on inland waters, who said that they saw in the north-east a great and broad fire near the earth, and it increased in length continuously up to the sky, and the sky opened on four sides and fought against it, as if it was going to quench it, and the fire increased no more then up towards the heavens').

²⁹ *Ða ferde se kyng þenen to Portesmuðe 7 læi þære eall ofer Pentecostewuce; þa sone swa he hæfde wind swa ferde he ofer into Normandie* ('Thence the king went to Portsmouth and lay there all through Whit week. Then as soon as he had a wind, he sailed across Normandy').

In Irish chronicles celestial portents bespeak an expectation of the final *consummatio mundi* and the signs heralding its arrival, not contemporary political anxieties [...]. The Irish material is always “sacred”, not secular, in its sphere of applicability. Both Bede and the annalists considered comets to be omens and thus worth recording. But while for Bede, such portents implied political turmoil, for the Irish churchmen of the seventh to the eleventh centuries, they were signs of God’s plan for the end of the world, beyond mere temporal affairs.³⁰

The occurrence of the wind in the *ASC* seems to be connected to mundane events.³¹ Its destructive force is undeniable since it can cause extensive fire, damage to houses, crops and property. It is likely that the Anglo-Saxon chroniclers did witness a series of violent storms in some specific years, and thought it was worth transmitting the record. Also they may have deliberately associated the negative power of the wind with unfortunate events. Nevertheless, this does not account for the fact that the wind does not appear in any annal prior to the year 1009; there surely must have been strong winds in the 9th and 10th centuries in Britain which caused great damage. By contrast, the wind is regularly mentioned in Irish chronicles from the 7th to the 12th centuries, particularly in the *Chronicum Scotorum*. Why, then, were the Anglo-Saxon chroniclers not interested in recording it in previous annals? I shall argue that the Anglo-Saxon annalists’ interest in the wind was prompted by the dissemination of computistical materials, including Easter tables, treatises on natural science, texts and diagrams on the direction and/or names of winds, weather prognostics and prognostication by the wind, which reached England from Fleury during the Benedictine Reform. In the ‘Carolingian Renaissance’, the study of computus and astronomy became an integral part of the educational reform in monastic centres like Fleury. Faith Wallis notes that

³⁰ Mark Williams, *Fiery Shapes: Celestial Portents and Astrology in Ireland and Wales, 700-1700*, Oxford 2010, p. 11. See also D. McCarthy / A. Breen, “Astronomical observations in the Irish annals and their motivation”, *Peritia* 11 (1998), pp. 1-43.

³¹ In the introduction to the translation of Bede’s *On the Nature of Things*, Kendall and Wallis argue that “the astronomy and cosmology of *On the Nature of Things* is not knowledge acquired and enjoyed for its own sake, but *practical* knowledge. In the medieval scheme of things, ‘practical’ rarely means utilitarian. It is always linked to the ancient notion of ‘practical philosophy’, that is, of ethics. To envisage astronomy as practical meant, then, two things for Bede: ‘the use of the regular motions of the heavens to reckon the passing of times and seasons, and the attempts to incorporate those celestial virtues of stability and order into human lives and societies’” (*Bede: On the Nature of Things* ..., pp. 6-7).

Computus manuscripts also became convenient ‘filing cabinets’ for fragments of ancient scientific erudition which impinged on the issue of time. Around the nucleus of computistica gathered a variable halo of other subjects. Some could be considered background materials: mathematics, cosmology, astronomy. Others were associated with the calendar by analogy, like medicine (diagnostics and therapeutics being closely regulated by astronomical time or even prosody which is the science of the measurement of speech in time).³²

In the wake of the Carolingian period, this cultural and educational energetic activity culminated in the production of a great number of *computus* anthologies, including, among other works, extracts from Bede’s *De natura rerum*, and medical and prognostic texts which were disseminated throughout Europe.³³ As a result, as Roy M. Liuzza points out, prognostics “begin to appear in significant numbers in continental *computus* collections ... in response to Charlemagne’s requirement in the *Admonitio Generalis* of 789 that all clergy should be taught *computus* in the school”.³⁴ Indeed most Anglo-Saxon prognostic texts seem to derive from Continental Latin exemplars which reached England from the end of the 10th century, and acquired great popularity in the 11th and 12th centuries. Of the numerous links between Fleury and England, Abbo is perhaps the best known.³⁵ He was well versed on the subjects of *computus* and astronomy, and taught at Ramsey from 985 to 987.³⁶ Further links include Oswald of Worcester and Germanus, who are known to have spent some time in Fleury. Oswald was, in fact, responsible for turning Worcester from a secular into a monastic cathedral, where scribes were actively involved in copying computistical and prognostic materials from the Continent.

³² Bede: *The Reckoning of Time*, transl. with introd., notes and comm. by Faith Wallis, Liverpool 1999 (repr. with corrections: 2004), p. xxiii.

³³ See Marco Mostert, *The Library of Fleury: A Provisional List of MSS*, Hilversum 1989, p(p).?. See also *Schriften zur Komputistik im Frankenreich von 721 bis 818*, I-III., hg. von Arno Borst, Hannover 2006, p(p).?.

³⁴ *Anglo-Saxon Prognostics. An Edition and Translation of Texts from London, British Library, MS Cotton Tiberius A.iii*, ed. and transl. by R. M. Liuzza, Cambridge 2011, p. 71.

³⁵ Cf. *Byrhtferth’s Enchiridion*, ed. by P. S. Baker and M. Lapidge, Oxford 1995, p(p).?.

³⁶ See Marco Mostert, *The Political Theology of Abbo of Fleury. A Study of the Ideas about Society and Law of the Tenth-Century Monastic Reform*, Hilversum 1987, p(p).?.

2. *Wind, computus, and prognostics*

The Anglo-Saxons were surely familiar with descriptions of the wind from Biblical texts, where it is generally associated with the authority of God, and specifically with His power to admonish and punish mankind, as in *Genesis* 41:25-28 and *Exodus* 10:13. The wind is generated from the Creator and used according to His own will.³⁷ This is emphasised in the *Historia ecclesiastica*, where Bede says:

Mouet enim aera Dominus, uentos excitat, iaculatur fulgora, de caelo intonat, ut terrigenas ad timendum se suscitet, ut corda eorum in memoriam futuri iudicii reuocet, ut superbiam eorum dissipet, et conturbet audaciam, reducto ad mentem tremendo illo tempore, quando ipse caelis ac terris ardentibus uenturus est in nubibus, in potestate magna et maiestate, ad iudicandos uiuos et mortuos.³⁸

A similar view is present in Ælfric's *Passio sanctorum apostolorum Simonis et Jude*:

Hwæt ða drihten arærde micelne wind. and se gelæhte ealne ðone lig. and abær hine to ðæs cyninges botle. swa þæt him ne belæfde nan ðing unforbur-nen. and he sylf earfoðlice þam fyre ætbærst.³⁹

³⁷ From *Judith*, ll. 346-349: [...] *Þæs sy ðam leofan Dryhtne / wuldor to widan aldre, þe gesceop wind ond lyfte, / roderas ond rume grundas, swylce eac reðe streamas / ond swe-gles dreamas, þurh his sylfes miltse* ('For that be glory to the beloved Lord for ever and ever, who created wind and air, the heavens and spacious earth, likewise the raging seas and joys of heaven, through his own individual grace'); cf. *Old and Middle English c.890-c.1450: An Anthology*, ed. by Elaine Treharne, 3rd ed., Chichester / Malden (MA) 2010, pp. 240-241.

³⁸ 'For the Lord moves the air, raises the winds, hurls the lightnings, and thunders forth from heaven so as to rouse the inhabitants of the world to fear Him, to call them to remember the future judgement in order that He may scatter their pride, and confound their boldness by bringing to their minds that dread time when He will come in the clouds in great power and majesty, to judge the living and the dead, while the heavens and the earth are aflame' (cf. *Bede's Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, ed. by B. Colgrave and R. A. B. Mynors, Oxford 1969, pp. 342-345 (IV.3)).

³⁹ 'Whereupon the Lord raised a great wind, and it caught all the flame, and bare it to the king's dwelling, so that tether remained nothing to him unburnt, and he himself with difficulty escaped from the fire' (*Ælfric's Catholic Homilies. The Second Series: Text*, ed. by Malcolm Godden, London 1979; Hom. II, 37 B1.2.40).

This understanding of the phenomenon seems to justify the assumption that the wind may also be seen as God's way of punishing certain individuals whose behaviour was considered immoral.⁴⁰ This does not mean that the wind is always an unfavourable phenomenon, and the entry for the year 1123 is a good example of this other line of thought. However, it is its fury and might which seems to have exerted a strong fascination in both classical and medieval authors. In the *Etymologiae*, Isidore defines the wind thus:

Ventus [est] aer commotus et agitatus, et pro diversis partibus caeli nomina diversa sortitus. Dictus autem ventus quod sit vehemens et violentus. Vis enim eius tanta est ut non solum saxa et arbores evellat, sed etiam caelum terramque conturbet, maria commoveat.⁴¹

Isidore's account reiterates the theme of violence and vigour in relation to the wind with the adjectives *vehemens* and *violentus*. Its power is so strong and arbitrary that it not only *saxa et arbores evellat*, but also agitates the sky and tosses the seas. Based on Isidore, Bede describes the wind thus:

Ventus est aer commotus et agitatus, sicut flabello, breui potest adprobari. Nec aliud intelligitur quam fluctus aeris. Qui, ut Clemens ait, ex quibusdam montibus excelsis, uelut compressus et coangustatus, ordinatione Dei cogitur et exprimitur in uentos ad excitandos fructus, aestusque temperandos. Pro diuersis autem partibus caeli nomina diuersa sortitur.⁴²

⁴⁰ This seems to be the case in the *ASC*, where one may argue that, in a few instances, the wind is employed as a sort of divine punishment. I shall not discuss this here due to space constraints.

⁴¹ 'It is named wind (*ventus*) because it is furious (*vehemens*) and violent (*violentus*), for its power is such that it not only uproots rocks and trees but even disturbs the sky and the earth and tosses the seas' (*Isidori Hispalensis episcopi Etymologiarum ...*, vol. II, XIII.xi.[1]; the English translation is taken from *The Etymologies of Isidore of Seville*, transl. with introd. and notes by Stephen A. Barney *et al.*, Cambridge 2006, p. 275). In the same book of the *Etymologiae*, Isidore gives the names of the winds and describes their characteristics and influence on the earth.

⁴² 'Wind is air moved and agitated, as can be proved with a small fan. And it is understood as being nothing else than a flow of air, which, as Clement says, after being as if it were compressed and channelled, is forced by the ordinance of God from certain high mountains and squeezed out into winds to quicken crops and temper the heat. And they receive their various names from the various parts of the sky' ([Beda Venerabilis,] *De natura rerum*, in *Beda Venerabilis Opera*, pars 6: *Opera didascalica*, pars I, ed. Charles W. Jones, Turnholti

This testifies that, apart from an obvious theological reading, the wind also acquired a framework of scientific investigation and a prognosticatory function. References to the wind in the *ASC* do not have to be read in isolation, but ought to be related to the type of Continental and English scientific literature concerning natural phenomena which would have been available to learned monastic communities in the 11th and 12th centuries. Increasing attention to the weather, particularly winds and thunder, seems to have been stimulated by a strong interest in natural science, including treatises and diagrams on winds and prognostic texts which originated on the Continent and were transmitted and disseminated together in computistical anthologies.⁴³ Bede's scientific works were highly regarded in Carolingian schools and scriptoria. As Joshua A. Westgard argues,

it was in Carolingian scriptoria and libraries that his [= Bede's] works were carefully copied and preserved, and from which some of them were re-imported into Britain in the wake of the ninth century, when disruption and neglect appear to have led to the loss of many of the manuscripts of his works that must have been present in the libraries of eighth-century Northumbria.

The wide availability of Bedan works in the Carolingian period in turn made possible their even greater multiplication and spread during the course of the twelfth century, when they continued to be copied frequently for both new and established monastic libraries, and when their popularity peaked.⁴⁴

Bede's scientific works acquired great popularity during the Benedictine Reform; both Ælfric and Byrhtferth worked extensively with Bede's *De temporum ratione* and *De natura rerum* (the latter was heavily based on the works of Pliny and particularly on ch. 37 of Isidore's *De natura rerum*), and these texts continued to be used in teaching.⁴⁵ On this point, Nicole G. Disenza notes that

1975, pp. 173-234, at pp. 217-218; the English translation is taken from *Bede: On the Nature of Things* ..., p. 90).

⁴³ For a study on wind diagrams, see Philip Pulsiano, "Old English nomina ventorum", *Studia Neophilologica* 66 (1994), pp. 15-26, and Obrist, "Medieval diagrams ...".

⁴⁴ Joshua A. Westgard, "Bede and the Continent in the Carolingian age and beyond", in *The Cambridge Companion to Bede*, ed. by Scott DeGregorio, Cambridge 2010, pp. 201-215, at pp. 201-202.

⁴⁵ Kendall and Wallis note that "Bede's works on nature and time were and remained authoritative texts everywhere in Western Europe right through the twelfth century" (*Bede: On the Nature of Things* ..., p. 37).

The reuse by Ælfric (early 990s) and Byrhtferth (c. 1011) of Bede's *DTR* [= *De temporum ratione*] and *DNR* [= *De natura rerum*] and of continental astronomical texts tell us much about renewed scientific interests in monastic houses [...]. Though the Benedictine Reform period in England is best known for its reform of religious houses and liturgical practices, and its literary and artistic production, science played a role as well.⁴⁶

In *De temporibus anni*, Ælfric discusses the wind in the context of the four elements and links *wind* to *lyft* ('air'):

Swa eac ure lichaman habbað ægðer gehætan, gewætan, eorðan 7 lyft.
Seo lyft þe we embe sprecað astihð up fornean oð þone monan, 7 aberð
ealle wolcnu 7 stormas. Seo lyft ðonne heo astyred bið is wind.⁴⁷

This is followed by a list of the various names of the wind according to the direction from which it blows, although Ælfric seems to be aware of the different copying traditions and confusion in relation to the names of the winds: *Unc ðincð to menigfeald þæt we swiðor embe ðis sprecon* ('It seems to us too complex to discuss this [topic] at length'). Winds were an essential part of the cosmos, and for Ælfric, as well as for his predecessors, were worthy of investigation. Ælfric's *De temporibus anni* was disseminated mainly in computistical collections, as Martin Blake notes:

whilst we may assume that *DTA* [= *De temporibus anni*] was written initially to fulfil local educational needs, including perhaps the clarification of some points of difficulty in the *Catholic Homilies*, nevertheless as it reached other centres it found different users. Elsewhere, it was seen as a natural companion-piece to calendars, computistical texts and tables, astronomical works, liturgical pieces and prognostics.⁴⁸

⁴⁶ Nicole G. Discenza, "Following in the tracks of Bede: Science and cosmology in the English Benedictine Reform", in *Anglo-Saxon Traces*, ed. by J. Roberts and L. Webster, Tempe (AZ) 2011, pp. 67-86, at p.69.

⁴⁷ 'In the same way, our bodies contain heat, moisture, earth and air. The air which we speak about rises up almost as far as the moon, and carries all clouds and storms. When the air is stirred up, it becomes wind' (*Ælfric's De temporibus anni*, ed. with a transl. by Martin Blake, Cambridge 2009, pp. 92-95).

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 41.

The majority of the surviving 11th- and 12th-century manuscripts containing Ælfric's *De temporibus anni* were the product of influential monastic scriptoria, including Canterbury and Winchester which also were among the main centres of production of prognostic texts.⁴⁹ The link between prognostics, annals and computistical treatises is hardly surprising in view of the fact that weather prognostics, for example, attracted the attention of the Anglo-Saxon clergy because of their relevance to the moveable feasts in the Church calendar.⁵⁰ The scanning of certain signs can be justified in terms of its usefulness for weather predictions and expected crop yields, while the inspection of others assists the calculation of dates, and is therefore relevant to the organisation of the Church year.

There exists a single prognostication by the wind in Old English, which survives in the 12th-century addition to MS Oxford, Bodleian Library, Hatton 115, f. 149v, probably produced at Christ Church, Canterbury.⁵¹ The prognostication, in which the wind is the main prophetic sign, is divided according to the twelve nights of Christmas. The earliest known (unpublished) text of a wind prognostication in Latin appears in the 9th-century MS Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, nouv. acq. 1616, fol. 12v, a computistical manuscript probably produced at Fleury. It is likely that versions of the prognostication reached England from the Continent possibly during the 11th century. The prophecies of this type of prognostication are all negative as one would expect because of the ominous symbolism of the wind. An example is the prophecy for the first night which predicts: *Gyf se wind byoð on þa forma niht gehadode weras*

⁴⁹ These manuscripts are: London, British Library (henceforth BL), Cotton Tiberius A.iii, ff. 2-173 (s. xi, Christ Church); London, BL, Cotton Tiberius B. v and Nero D. ii, s. xi, ff. 2-73 and ff. 77-78 (Winchester or Christ Church); Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, 376, ff. 1, 2 and 7-10 (s. xii, Rochester or Canterbury); London, BL, Cotton Titus D. xxvi and xxvii, ff. 30r-54r (1023-1029, Winchester) – Titus D xxvi, f. 21v, contains an incomplete diagram with the name of the four principal winds; London, BL, Cotton Caligula A. xv, ff. 120-53 (s. xi, Christ Church); London, BL, Cotton Vitellius C. viii, ff. 22-25 (s. xi, Winchester). The most recent studies on Anglo-Saxon prognostics include Chardonnens, *Anglo-Saxon Prognostics, 900-1100 ...*, and *Anglo-Saxon Prognostics. An Edition and Translation ...* by R. Liuzza.

⁵⁰ Arno Borst argues that “Bede brought together time-reckoning, the liturgy and historiography; the one cannot be understood without the other two. The computus, the martyrology and the chronicle constituted the three equally powerful mainstays of that scholarship which flourished in Benedictine monasteries and succeeded in bringing eternity into the present” (Arno Borst, *The Ordering of Time: From the Ancient Computus to the Modern Computer*, Chicago 1993, p. 41).

⁵¹ The text was edited in Chardonnens, *Anglo-Saxon Prognostics, 900-1100 ...*, p. 490.

sweltað ('If wind occurs on the first night, men in holy orders will die'). All predictions are unambiguous; they are entirely based on the observation of the meteorological phenomenon, and are not aimed at challenging the users. As László S. Chaddonnens claims, "prognostication does not allow for probability: it offers certainty".⁵² Most of the predictions in the Old English prognostic text mirror the disasters associated with the phenomenon in the *ASC*. These range from *gehadode weras sweltað* ('death of men in holy orders', as in 1039C, 1053D, 1103E, 1118E and 1122E) in the first night of Christmas, and *westmas forweorðað* ('fruits/crops will perish', as in 1052C and 1053D, 1103E, 1114E, 1118E and 1121E) in the second and third nights, to *frecne on seo. 7 scipu forweorðað* ('danger at sea and ships will be destroyed', as in 1009C, D and E, 1050D and 1075D) in the sixth night. One may argue that the chroniclers responsible for inserting references to the wind in the 11th- and 12th-century versions of the *ASC* (C, D and E) were familiar with both prognostic texts and weather-lore treatises, including Bede's *De natura rerum* and/or Ælfric's *De temporibus anni*, which were disseminated in the same computistical collections from the same monastic houses. The wind is mentioned conspicuously in MS E (Oxford, Bodleian Library, Laud 636), a copy produced at Peterborough around 1121 in an effort to refurbish the library after the terrible fire of 1116. Its annals run up to the year 1154. The manuscript is written continuously by the same hand up to 1121, with several interpolations relating to Peterborough. Then the same hand added at intervals 1122-1131. In or after 1155, another scribe added the events related to the years 1132-1155. It has been argued that the hand responsible for copying the greater part of the Peterborough Chronicle is the same as that of MS London, British Library, Harley 3667, a collection which contains annals of Peterborough Abbey, prognostics, parts of Byrhtferth's computus, astronomical texts and names of the winds, stressing further the links between chronicles, prognostics and natural science.⁵³ Whether or not the hands are identical, as Cecily Clark argues, "it is worthy of comment that the E text of the *ASC* was copied (and to a large

⁵² Chaddonnens, *Anglo-Saxon Prognostics, 900-1100* ..., p. 6.

⁵³ Another manuscript which contains the same sort of texts is Oxford, St John's MS 17 (s. xii, Thorney Abbey), which shares prognostic texts with Harley 3667. Wallis points out that "For Bede, a strong link between computus and historiography seems to have been self-evident. Indeed, his second major innovation as a computus writer was to incorporate a full world-chronicle into his computistical writings" (in *Bede: The Reckoning of Time* ..., p. lxviii).

extent compiled) by someone who was well versed in the computistical learning available at Ramsey”.⁵⁴

Canterbury, Worcester, Peterborough and Winchester seem to have been the main centres of production of weather prognostics (sun, wind and *Revelatio Esdrae*). Because of the role that Winchester played in the Benedictine Reform movement in England, it is not surprising that there are textual links between manuscripts which emanate from Winchester, Canterbury and Worcester. Susan Irvine suggests that

If the Peterborough compiler did draw on pre-existing annals, they must have been received in small batches, more or less as they became available. As with the entries from 1080 to 1121, it is tempting to speculate that Canterbury played some part in the circulation, if not the origin, of this material, given the Canterbury connections of both Peterborough and Worcester.⁵⁵

MSS C, D and E of the *ASC* were produced respectively at the houses of Canterbury (mid-11th century), Worcester (mid or later 1040s) and Peterborough (12th century). These centres of learning formed part of an intellectual network which promoted the dissemination of both scientific tracts and prognostic texts in the late Anglo-Saxon period. The prognosticatory function of the wind in MSS C, D and E cannot be established with any certainty, although the examples in the *ASC* to a certain degree seem to suggest almost a cause and effect relationship between the meteorological phenomenon and the historical reports. On the one hand, I am aware that one cannot overlook the fact that, in a few instances (shipwrecking, fire, and destruction of houses, crops and trees), the wind may be seen as being naturally and directly responsible for those events, and that no ominous symbolism may be attached to it. On the other, in the prognostication by the wind text the natural phenomenon is clearly foretelling those same ‘direct cause and effect’ events: *þære æfteran niht. 7 þere þriddan niht bið wind þonne westmas forweorðað* (‘on the third and fourth nights, [if] wind occurs, then fruits shall perish’); *þeore feorðan niht gif wind byð lef byð lytel* (‘if wind occurs on the fourth night, there will be shortage of bread’); *Ðære .v. niht gif wind byð þonne byð*

⁵⁴ In *The Peterborough Chronicle (The Bodleian Manuscript Laud Misc. 636)*, ed. by Dorothy Whitelock, with an appendix by Cecily Clark, Copenhagen 1954, p. 71.

⁵⁵ Susan Irvine, “The production of the Peterborough Chronicle”, in *Reading the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle: Language, Literature, History*, ed. by Alice Jorgensen, Turnhout 2010, pp. 49–66, at p.66.

frecne on seo. 7 scipu forweorðað ('If wind occurs on the fifth night, then there will be peril at sea, and ships will be destroyed'), and *Ðære .x. niht gif win treow byoð fornerwede* ('If wind occurs on the tenth night, trees will be stunted in growth'). As Chardonnens puts it, "to question whether the outcome of the prediction pertains to reality will not detract from the conviction that is apparent in the text".⁵⁶ In fact, the Peterborough chronicler's desire to convince his audience of the prognosticatory role of the wind is made clear in the annal for the year 1122E, where he reports that after the big wind on the Tuesday after Palm Sunday, *comen feale tacne wide hwear on Englalond 7 feole dwild wearen geseogen 7 geheord* ('came many signs far and wide in England and many apparitions were seen and heard'). It is evident from the account above that the meteorological phenomenon was seen as a *tacn* predicting the events which followed its appearance, as well as in the Hatton 115 prognostication by the wind.

One can indeed argue that there is a correlation between the appearance of the wind (from the year 1009 to the year 1123) in the *ASC* and those monastic centres – including Canterbury, Worcester, and Peterborough – that had a strong interest in computus and natural science in (post-)Benedictine Reform Anglo-Saxon England, in which winds, storms and other natural phenomena were given a framework of investigation that may have led to their increasing role in historical sources such as the *ASC*. This renewed interest in the wind and in its prognosticatory function is a product of the theological scholarship and scientific enquiry of the period, as well as of the individual scribes' genuine scientific interest and of their readiness to alter their sources to heighten their relevance to certain events or a particular readership, which can be regarded as further evidence of this seriousness of purpose.

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⁵⁶ Chardonnens, *Anglo-Saxon Prognostics, 900-1100* ..., p. 6.

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